3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

anxious to protect her charge in every way, and with the connivance of the women helpers she made little charms of bits of roots to hang around the baby's neck to make him grow quickly and to ward off sorcery and witchcraft. She threaded pumpkin seeds and tied them around his neck to make his teeth come quickly if they were late in appearing. These charms were generally those used by the local peoples, and Ngoni fathers were contemptuous about their use and efficacy. 'These women are spoiling our children,' they said, and then reassured themselves by remembering that a boy would be free from such women's spoiling once he went into the boys' dormitory.

Variants on the Ngoni pattern

This traditional pattern of authority and behaviour in respect of birth, infant care and weaning was essentially that of the true Ngoni, that relatively small aristocratic group who never forgot their superior social status and its foundation in their ancestry. This first stage in the socialization of a child, from birth to weaning, brought out clearly two fundamental features of Ngoni social organization. One was the role played by the senior women who had themselves in their childhood been brought up on strict Ngoni lines. The father of the new baby accepted the role played by his own mother in controlling, and if necessary coercing, his young wife. Though, as we shall see later, every Ngoni boy and young man had a period of virtually complete escape from feminine control, once a man married and his young wife was established within the social group of his mother's house, he acknowledged his mother's authority over her, and particularly over the birth and care of his child. The mother-son relationship of the young father to his own mother dominated the relationship of the young mother to her child. Young Ngoni fathers never questioned their allegiance to their own mothers, cherishing them as they grew older and supporting them in their exercise of authority. Much as he loved his

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302 washing they applied the fat to their hair and combed it out, de-kinking it now and then with strips of bamboo bound tightly to the head. They scented their hair with the juice of sweet-smelling leaves, and dressed it formerly in the high chignon. As they gave that up, they took to wearing headcloths of different-coloured cloth so arranged that [301] beadbands across the forehead could be worn. Ngoni girls needed no urging to take this beauty treatment very seriously, and before a big *ngoma* dance, gave it much time and thought.

554 Only the big wives and elder sisters of chiefs could wear
301 the necklace and headpiece of leopard or lion claws. They were the distinguishing mark of an Ngoni 'princess' or 'queen'.

The art of cleanliness

181 I have called this section an 'art' because the Ngoni took
356 an aesthetic pleasure in achieving and maintaining certain
515 standards in their homes and in their persons, which were held up to young adults as being highly desirable. This
182 emphasis on a particular kind of cleanliness, while putting up with much that was not clean in their surroundings, was only one of several inconsistencies in Ngoni culture. The appreciation of a desire for this kind of cleanliness had not necessarily any connexion with hygienic cleanliness. It was [751] more closely associated with the Ngoni love of orderliness and scrupulous attention to detail in the appearance of persons and places. It was also connected with what they regarded as comfort and good living. The effect of mission teaching about health and sanitation, and of government [177] courses held for chiefs to instruct them in modern welfare measures, often caused confusion among Ngoni elders. Sometimes their traditional standards of cleanliness coincided with modern hygienic standards, and sometimes they did not. In any case it was seldom that Europeans recognized that the Ngoni had any standards to begin with, and they

6:Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

844 If a female child, "You have seen a basket." Then the man comes and sits down on the verandah and makes fire. The old fire in the hut is thrown away. The old woman takes up the new fire and kindles with it a new fire in the hut. The husband goes away to another hut. He does not now cohabit with [846] any of his other wives until his wife, who was confined, is seen again in public.

II. When they know the umbilical cord is going to break, when they set the infant on the knees (legs), they lay it on its side so that when the cord breaks it will fall on one side; for if it breaks and falls on the pubes the child will be impotent, or barren. The umbilical cord they bury on the verandah. That day is the one on which they shave the mother and child. They begin with the infant and they shave the mother. On shaving the infant's head they leave a little hair on the fontanel, and [614] should the infant be of the clan *Maseko*, they also leave a little patch on the back of the head, and 553 then his godmother gives the child a name, saying, "My grandchild's name is so and so." This name it will have until such time as it begins to laugh and notice people, then the father, should he wish, will give the child another name. When it grows up still farther it will give itself a name, saying, "Now I am so and so." When the child becomes a man he will once again discard his old name and take another. And if a person calls him by the old name, he says, "He has named me by that thing the wild bush-pigs unearth while digging with their tusks" [meaning something very old]. When they have finished the shaving, the child's grandmother 854 powders some medicine called *pfundabwe*, this she 218 mixes with castor oil and red clay, and then rubs on ●751 the fontanel. This medicine they continually renew. When the infant gets strong and big they stop. The

6:Rattray E,G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

reason they put on this medicine is that they fear the sun lest it strike through the skull. They also take a purgative medicine called *chizuzu*, and pour a decoction in a gourd used for cooking the infant's gruel. The gruel is left off once the child gets strong.

III. Now they prepare to steam the infant. They get the roots of the *Nyalinse* tree and the leaves of the *Chipunganyunyu*, and put them in a pot of water, and get four large white pebbles, and put them in the fire, and when they are red hot, lift them out between two pieces of stick, and drop them into the pot, and the steam envelops the infant. They do this because they fear a disease called *Tsempo* and *Mauka*. This done, the floor of the hut is replastered [with dung], and they set fire to everything that was left in the hut—baskets, potsherds, and spoons. The fire in the hollow in the centre of the floor, they rake up on the floor level, and remove the ashes only, but when they come to fasten the mkuzi belt round the infant's waist, the fire is completely extinguished, and rekindled from that of some other hut. Then the husband comes and stands upright near the doorway, and little cuts are made on his leg. They begin with his big toe, and cut four little slashes, and four on his shin, and four on his knee, both sides, and do the same on the other leg, and on his chest are cut two little gashes, and on his back two. Into these cuts is rubbed some medicine for a disease called *Chinyalo*. When they do this they fear, should the man step over the spot on the verandah where the umbilical cord and afterbirth are buried, he might take this disease of the legs (Chinyalo). If the man have another wife it is she who twists the belt made from the bark of the *Mpoza* tree and places it underneath the mat where she and her husband sleep. Next morning

4: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1909) 1910 FT7 Yao
Maravi FR4
Ngoni FR5

The placenta is buried in a refuse heap,[1] outside whence it is sometimes said to be stolen by *syphili* (evil spirits) to make medicine. A caul is known, and now is said to be caused by the father continually wearing a hat. It is not kept for any purpose, as far as I know. If a woman die with the child unborn the child is cut out through the abdomen, when the body is in the grave, and the two bodies then buried together, the reason given being that if this is not done many other women would die in the same way. Cæsarian section is never performed; a still-born child is buried in the refuse heap; there is no treatment for still-birth.[2] Miscarriage is said to be common. Post-partum hæmorrhage is said to be one of the frequent causes of death.

After the confinement the whole body is washed, and then a piece of burning wood is placed between the legs of the woman and allowed to smoulder for several hours; this as a means of purification.

The woman stays in the house for a week. She does not resume sexual intercourse with her husband for two years unless she is the only wife, when six months to one year is allowed to elapse, though she cohabits after one or two weeks. During the puerperium there is no special diet. The child is suckled for two to three years by mother, or grandmother if the former die; or if neither are available, by the aunt (maternal). Death of the child may ensue as the result of being suckled by others. Suckling sometimes prolonged for four years, belief holding that thereby pregnancy is prevented.

After miscarriage the woman remains in the house only two days, but has to take medicine for six months, abstaining from sexual intercourse for half that period. Medicine is frequently taken to cause abortion, and may be made by one person to affect another; it is taken when a period is missed. Sterility is said to be common among women. No artificial sterility is produced, but medicine is taken and a cord run round the loins to prevent pregnancy supervening. The new-born child is first washed in ordinary water and then in the water in which a man and his wife have washed after coitus. After this the other women may touch the baby, but not young girls, otherwise it might die. If it die before it has left the house it would be buried by women just as a still-born child, the men refusing to assist. After the cord has separated (one week) the child and mother leave the house and appear in public. The child's head is oiled this day and sometimes medicine made of charcoal is pasted on with some beads as a preventive against injury by the strong sun.[3]

The child is named usually after the maternal uncle's child-name which is given by the uncle (Nyasa).

[1] In an Angoni village a woman I saw buried the placenta under the floor of the hut, using a hoe to dig with, upon which she first milked her breasts—the first milk. This to prevent abscess in the gland.

[2] With still-birth, women accuse their husbands of having syphilis, and "a child is often born with sores on it."

[3] Medicine called *Pyrudabus*, see p. 296.